

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 244 974

TM 840 277

TITLE How to Prepare for and Take Examinations.
INSTITUTION Association of American Publishers, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE Jul 83
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Students; Higher Education; Scheduling; Study Guides; Study Habits; Study Skills; *Test Coaching; *Test Wiseness

ABSTRACT

This guide to preparing for, and taking, examinations was designed for college students. The booklet recommends a series of techniques for proper preparation. These include making a semester, or quarter, study plan; and appropriate scheduling of study time and determination of a study area. Good review techniques involve planning a systematic review, summarizing text and class notes, and reviewing material with classmates. The pre-exam hours should be well organized to allow ample rest, adequate time to arrive at testing site, and time to eat a sensible meal. The student's approach to the exam should be planned. Directions and test items should be read carefully, jotting down key words and phrases from memory. The student should begin with the easiest questions and write neatly and legibly. A review of corrected exam papers will enable a student to make each exam a learning experience. Samples of various types of test items are included. (DWH)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED244974

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AND TAKE EXAMINATIONS

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

H. Schermann

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

TM 840 277



student service
Association of American Publishers

This booklet is one in a series of AAP STUDENT SERVICE articles developed for the college textbook publishers to help students improve their use of study time and learning materials. Titles of the other booklets can be found on the back cover.

Studying is an essential aspect of education — representing a large investment in time and money. Like driving, athletics or any other activity, it requires practice and concentration. To study well it is important to know how to make maximum use of the books and facilities that are available. The enjoyment of learning and the retention of knowledge depends in great part on developing good study skills and learning habits.

Association of American Publishers, Inc.
One Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016

SAN #204-1714

How to prepare for and take examinations

The fact that exams often determine grades tends, unfortunately, to take away from their real purpose — a self assessment of your understanding of the material covered in a particular course. So much emphasis is placed on the importance of exams that often just the word makes people anxious. The best way for you to avoid such a situation is by preparing yourself, beginning at the start of each term or quarter and continuing throughout the school year. The key lies in your ability to use time wisely and to develop practical study habits that work for you. The following steps will help you approach exams with confidence and will reduce the feelings of "panic" that so often take over when the "blue book" appears:

1. Make a semester or quarter length study plan.
2. Use good review techniques.
3. Organize your pre-exam hours.
4. Plan out your approach to the exam.
5. Make each exam a learning experience.

Make a semester or quarter study plan

You need to plan for each week of your courses: long range plans would include scheduling term papers, mid-term exams, finals while you also have to plan for weekly and/or daily quizzes. Make schedules for yourself, try them out, and revise them as necessary.

Make a realistic weekly and daily schedule. Keep a balance between classes and studying — the "work" of college — and social and extra-curricular activities — the "fun" of college. Include time for sleeping, meals, etc. Block out space for study time, class time, and recreation time.

Plan a suitable place to study. A regular study place, whether in your room, in the library, or at the kitchen table, will help you get down to work and will help you concentrate and avoid distractions. Have at hand all the materials you'll need: texts, notebooks, and pens.

Review what you have studied. Forgetting takes place almost at once after learning so you should immediately review material you have learned for the first time. Go over the main points from your class and/or text for a few minutes after studying them. Your memory then has a chance to retain these main points for later recall.

Keep your study periods realistic. An hour to an hour and a half is ample at any one time. Follow each study period with a change of pace — recreation, eating, etc.

Take clear notes. Your review of these notes and your textbook markings will give you the confidence you need and the feeling that you are on top of the material.

Use good review techniques

Preparing for exams should really be a matter of review. The time involved should be no more than 15 minutes for weekly quizzes, 2 to 3 hours for a mid-term exam, and 5 to 8 hours for a final exam.

Plan your review systematically and consistently. Look at your course outline, your lecture notes and your text notes. What are the major topics in each? Make a listing of them. Recall the special emphasis placed on certain topics in class and on chapter headings. These are all major points that are particularly important and well worth reviewing closely.

Summarize your text and class notes. Use this summary to remind yourself of all the information you have amassed on a particular topic.

Ask your teacher for an explanation of the scope of the exam. What are her or his goals for the exam? How will you be evaluated — by your knowledge of facts and details or by your understanding of ideas and concepts?

Review with others as long as it doesn't take the place of your own review. You'll have the advantage of sharing information with others who are reviewing the same material.

Cram, only if you must, but be selective. Skim each textbook chapter and each lecture for main ideas and list them on a summary sheet. Then recite, recite, and wish for the best.

Organize your pre-exam hours

Finish your exam preparation the evening before the exam by reviewing your summary sheets and fitting that information into a total and meaningful picture.

Have a good night's rest. If taking the exam in the evening, try to rest your mind and body for a few hours beforehand.

Don't rush. Allow yourself plenty of time to dress, arrive at the exam room, and get settled. Rushing will only add unnecessary pressure.

Eat a sensible meal rather than "junk food."

Stay calm. Some anxiety is natural and helpful. It sharpens your senses and "gets the adrenalin" going. But too much worrying just gets in the way. Think of the exam as only one part of the entire learning process.

Arrive early at the exam room so you can find a good seat with plenty of light. Sit away from friends and distractions. Get comfortable.

Plan out your approach to the exam

Read and understand the directions thoroughly. Do you have to answer all the questions or may you choose which ones to answer? Is there a time limit for each question? Will some questions count more than others in grading?

Read all the questions before answering any of them. This strategy will prevent you from putting down information for an early question that more appropriately belongs in your answer to a later question. Again, it will tell you if you have a choice between questions and whether some of them will count for more than others.

Jot down key words and phrases from your memory right on the exam questions. These reminders will help you organize your answers as you begin your written responses.

Calculate your time. Decide how much time you should devote to each question and how much time you'll need for review. Stick to your plan.

Start with the easiest question. This will give you confidence that you can handle the questions and will get you off to a flying start.

Be neat and legible. Write on one side of the paper only, leaving a wide (1½ inches) margin on the left hand side of the paper for your instructor's comments. Reserve space between answers so you have room for expansion should additional thoughts occur to you.

Keep the left hand page in your blue book blank. You can then make additions and/or changes in your answers on this blank page, drawing an arrow from these additions to the place on the right hand page where you wish the added material to go.

Objective tests come in various forms: true-false, multiple choice, completion or fill in the blank, and matching like items. These tests show you: knowledge of facts and details. You must read the instructions carefully to find out: must you answer all the questions? Will blanks count against you? Pay close attention to key words — *all, none, never*. When you're unsure which answer in a multiple choice question is the best, make a check next to the answer you initially feel is right and come back to it later for a final decision. Be sure to erase your earlier marks should you change an answer. You should have only one answer for each question. (See Figure 1 for examples of various objective questions.)

Essay questions go beyond objective tests: they require you to recall facts and ideas but further demand that you organize the information into thoughtful sentences and paragraphs. Be sure you understand the question as it is phrased and that you are aware of all the *parts* of the question before you begin your response. Underline or circle the key words in the question — *analyze, contrast, explain, interpret, summarize, etc.* Make your opening statement a summary of what you are going to say. Be direct and forceful. If you feel that you are running out of time and won't be able to finish some questions, write an outline for them. This will show your instructor that you did know the material but ran out of time. Make your answers as concise and clear as possible. Avoid repetition. Review all your answers after completing all the questions. Check to be sure you haven't omitted a key word or point.

Make each exam a learning experience

Review your corrected exam papers. Study your strengths and weaknesses. Note the comments made by your instructor and ask him/her for further explanation if they aren't clear to you. Each exam taken should help you do better on the next one.

Reassess your grades and work

When you receive your grades and get back exam books, read over the answers. Compare them to your textbook and class notes in order to check mistakes and find out why or how you answered incorrectly. If you don't understand your instructor's marks, ask him where you went wrong. This re-evaluation will help you recognize faults in your study skills. Learn by your mistakes and go on to the next phase of enjoyable and successful college work.

Figure 1*

Different types of true-false questions

Although the most common form for alternate-response items is that of a direct statement which is to be judged true or false, there are several variations, among which are the following:

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. The pressure in a fixed quantity of a gas varies directly as its volume if the temperature remains constant. | T | F |
| 2. Does a rip saw have larger teeth than a crosscut saw? | Yes | No |
| 3. <i>Make every false statement true by suggesting a substitute for the underlined word.</i>
The use of steam revolutionized transportation in the <u>seventeenth</u> century. | | |
| 4. The volume of a mass of gas | | |
| a. tends to increase as the temperature increases; | T | F |
| b. tends to increase as the pressure increases; | T | F |
| c. may be held constant by increasing pressure and decreasing temperature; | T | F |
| d. may be reduced by increasing pressure and decreasing temperature. | T | F |

A sample multiple-choice question

The examples that follow illustrate items that measure the various levels of the cognitive domain.

The following item measures knowledge or rote learning:

In the normal curve, what percent of the cases lies within one standard deviation plus and minus the mean?

- a. 62 percent
- b. 68 percent
- c. 75 percent
- d. 58 percent
- e. 34 percent

Two types of short-answer (completion) questions

1. *Question:*

What is the technical name for nearsightedness?

(_____)

2. *Incomplete sentence:*

The name of the first man to sail around
the world was (_____)

(_____)

A typical matching-like-items question

Each city on the left is the capital of one of the countries on the right. Place the letter of the country on the line before its capital city.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| _____ Canberra | a. Australia |
| _____ Edinburgh | b. Canada |
| _____ London | c. England |
| _____ Ottawa | d. Irish Free State |
| | e. Scotland |

*All examples cited from John A. Green, *Teacher-Made Tests*, 2nd ed., Harper & Row, 1975.

aap student service

The college textbook publishers initiated AAP STUDENT SERVICE to help young men and women improve their study skills. Millions of students have already benefited from this special series of booklets. The titles available are:

How to get the most out of your college education

How to get the most out of your textbooks

How to prepare for and take exams

How to improve your reading skills

How to build your writing skills

How to read technical textbooks

How to succeed in college:

A guide for the non-traditional student

How to succeed in your college courses:

A guide for the ESL student

The information used in AAP STUDENT SERVICE articles represent the thinking of leading authorities in the field of education and learning skills. Numerous books on these topics have been published by members of the Association of American Publishers and can be found in your college bookstores or library listings under *Methods of Study*, *College Student Orientation*, *Independent Study*, *Reading*, *Writing* or other headings suggested by your librarian or bookseller.

College textbook publishers welcome any suggestions you may have concerning textbooks. Your comments will help us to continually improve books and educational materials and provide you with the best possible learning tools.

AAP is happy to send individual students or faculty complimentary copies of these booklets. Large quantities are available at a nominal cost.

**Association of American Publishers
One Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016**